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**TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC MEETING
ON THE
PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF BUS LANES
ON BROAD AND MARKET STREETS**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1996
ONE NEWARK CENTER - 17TH FLOOR**

Thank you.

I am here to support continuation of the highly successful bus lanes which operate in the City of Newark during the morning and evening rush hours.

Contrary to claims by some business owners, this is not a for profit issue!

This is a city planning issue. What happens to the bus lanes determines whether Newark is going to be a viable city. Whether we exist with gridlock, or remain a city that maintains an orderly flow of traffic to address the 1.2 million workforce, residents and visitors who use our city streets and public transportation daily.

Let us remember that the majority of Newark residents, especially our senior citizens, use public transportation. Newark citizens ride the buses!

Let us also remember that bus lanes improve the safety and quality of service accorded bus riders. Newark citizens gain from bus lanes!

Even more importantly and as a former downtown store manager, I know there is no evidence to support the notion that a significant number of shoppers is denied the opportunity to shop between the hours of 4 and 6 p.m.

Why?

Statistics say that Newark has a large population below the poverty level. If this is the case, that population either would be working or coming home from work during times that parking is restricted, and shopping would not be a priority. Further, if they are on public assistance, many could not even afford a car to drive and park between 4 and 6 p.m.

Bus lanes improve the flow of traffic.

Bus lanes reduce gridlock and thereby reduce air pollution.

Bus lanes protect the safety of riders, business owners and residents.

Bus lanes provide buffer zones which allow emergency vehicles easier passage through main thoroughfares.

If profit is an issue - as charged by some business owners who decry the fact that customers cannot park in front of their stores and shop between the hours of 4 and 6 p.m. :

- a) Why not use the energy generated to protest the bus lanes to form a partnership for off street parking lots and off street parking decks?
- b) Why not build off street parking decks and turn Halsey Street and others into a paved walking mall for shoppers only? As in Trenton, New Jersey; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Orlando, Florida and other cities.

Again this a planning issue, not a for profit issue.

I further challenge business owners who claim they are expressing a concern for their customers to demonstrate equal concern for customers who complain that:

- * Many stores do not accept credit cards
- * Many stores illegally set minimum purchase requirements on credit cards
- * Many stores do not offer a bathroom for customers
- * Many stores will not allow undamaged merchandise to be returned for a legitimate reason

- * Many stores do not hire local residents
- * Many stores treat customers with disrespect (judged by color alone)

All of these things could have a huge impact on patronage.

My point is a simple one. Bus lanes cannot be singled out as the sole indicator for a failing or successful business, or the difference between profit and loss.

There is no quick fix, and the success of bus lanes for eight years should not be sacrificed for unsupported claims by those who do not have the City's best interest in mind.

I am ever knowledgeable that some business owners are funding candidates who support their view - I have another name that you can't print for this clandestine behavior.